

*June 1956*

A superb exhibition of photographs by the late Swiss photographer Werner Bischof will be on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art in the Educational Corridor from June 5 through June 26.

Lent by Magnum Photos, Inc., New York, an international cooperative picture agency of which Mr. Bischof was a leading member, the exhibition was first seen at the Art Institute of Chicago, and is now being circulated throughout the United States by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.

Included are fifty photos, in black-and-white and color, taken by Mr. Bischof while on two-year assignment in Japan for the Swiss picture magazine "DU." An extensive collection of the finest photographs was recently published by Simon and Schuster, New York, in a posthumous edition entitled "JAPAN", with text by Robert Guillain.

The thirty-seven year old photographer had already achieved world-wide acclaim as an extraordinarily gifted technician and visual reporter at the time of his tragic death in 1947, when his jeep fell from a mountain in Peru. Designer, painter, and author, Bischof sought always to express in his pictures the lives of various peoples in their native surroundings. His interpretations, which include post-war eastern Europe (while with the Swiss Red Cross), Korea, Indo-China, and Japan, speak with an eloquence that is clear in any language. He was photographing the ancient architecture of the Incas when his life came to its untimely halt.

The three sections of the exhibition depict "Ancient Japan," "Modern Japan," and "The Traditional Japanese Theatre." In the first section, Bischof has recorded ancient tradition as it persists in Japan's present-day religious observance, love of nature and elaborate social costume. Scenes such as that of Shinto priests crossing a temple courtyard in the snow under paper umbrellas, or of a man crouching to contemplate a flower arrangement in the "tokonoma" - an alcove devoted

wholly to the display of a work of art or a bunch of flowers - vividly portray that aspect of Japan which has remained unchanged for more than a thousand years.

"Modern Japan" is seen as a bustling, slowly modernizing country, still scarred by the near obliteration which it suffered during the war. In two vivid photographs showing the Emperor Hirohito with the Empress leaving Tokyo by train, Bischof has caught the feeling of an unassimilated westernisation, a theme which pervades all the works in this group. Though they are both dressed in European clothes, the Empress walks behind her husband, according to ancient custom, and as the train moves off, the Imperial couple look out of the window, while a minister who had formed part of the escort - along with the station master and everyone else present - bows bareheaded to the Imperial carriage, on which can be seen the badge of the gold chrysanthemum. In another scene, a young housewife in a kimono inspects with skeptical concentration a ready-made European dress in a department store. Here, and in many other examples, Bischof has given us not only photographs of today's Japan, but a point of view about it.

The splendor of the classical Buddhist No plays and modern Kabuki Theatre are revealed in the final group of photos, providing a colorful survey of Japanese culture.

Mr. Bischof's talents were particularly suited to a pictorial essay on Japan. His pictures, like Japanese art itself, are suggestive rather than purely literal, allowing the viewer vivid insight into the underlying spirit which he found to be Japan.